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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002131

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [CVIS](#) [EFIN](#) [ETRD](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZO1: AMMAN SITREP 31 (4/08 1700 LOCAL)

REF: AMMAN 2117

Classified By: DCM Gregory L. Berry for reasons 1.5 (B)(D).

General Overview

[11.](#) (C) The Embassy is operating on a normal schedule April 8. Consular services are open. Activities at the American Language Center remain suspended, and there is only restricted activity by FSNs at the Peace Corps office. Movements of American staff remain restricted.

[12.](#) (S) The Ambassador raised with Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher April 8 continued U.S. concerns over the unbalanced coverage in the Jordanian media of events in Iraq (reftel). The Ambassador cited for Muasher several examples of factually incorrect coverage in the Jordanian media of alleged coalition military actions, as well as examples of a distinctly pro-Iraq slant in coverage that is otherwise factually true. He argued that such coverage only fans the flames of anti-U.S. hatred and could make it more difficult for the U.S. to sustain its important programs in the long term.

Consular Issues

[13.](#) (U) Nothing new to report.

GOJ Actions/Statements

[14.](#) (U) Nothing new to report.

Security

[15.](#) (C) The situation remains calm. Two small gatherings planned for the evening of April 8: A pro-Iraq gathering inside the Labor Complex in Irbid and a mid-afternoon demonstration following prayers at the main Mosque in Salt. Both are expected to be peaceful.

Economic and Trade Developments

[16.](#) (SBU) On the heels of a strong performance Monday, the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) saw a slight drop-off in trading but still closed up .86% on Tuesday. Iraqi reconstruction continued to be the focus of traders as they continued to buy shares in industrial sector enterprises analysts believe are well-placed to play a prominent post-war role.

Refugee/Humanitarian Issues

[17.](#) (U) Two Iraqi refugees entered Jordan late on April 7. They were temporarily admitted to the TCN transit camp but are being moved to the UNHCR refugee camp this afternoon. According to UNHCR, the two Iraqis hold valid documents and tickets for onward travel to the UAE and wanted to join a third family member in Amman before leaving for the UAE. The GOJ would not allow the Iraqis to stay temporarily in Amman and instead offered either direct transfer to Queen Alia airport or temporary accommodations in the refugee camp. A third Iraqi national with document problems is being held in "no-man's land" at the border. No TCNs crossed into Jordan in the last 24 hours. UNHCR reports that the border remains open.

[18.](#) (U) Also late on April 7, the GOJ allowed all 22 Palestinians who had been held at "no-man's land" to enter the transit camp, bringing the total number of Palestinians temporarily admitted to Jordan to 40. In a related move, local press reported that King Abdullah allowed 13 Palestinians holding Iraqi or Egyptian travel documents to move from the transit camp to Amman on April 7. The 13 all have direct family ties (spouses/children) to Jordanian citizens and have been granted permission to stay only until

they are able to return to Iraq.

19. (U) Fierce sandstorms overnight destroyed one Rubb Hall at the UNHCR refugee camp and severely damaged two medical tents at the JRCS transit camp. At the request of IOM, CARE/Australia is today setting up replacement Rubb Halls at the transit camp. In the meantime, UNHCR-implementing partner Japan Platform is providing medical care at the transit camp until JRCS can re-establish its medical services. Strong winds and sandstorms continue to buffet Ruweished today; UNHCR reports that many TCNs are huddled in IOM buses, hoping to wait out the poor weather.

Press

10. (C) The April 18 killing of Al Jazeera journalist Tareq Ayoub in Baghdad, allegedly during a coalition "rocket attack," is the biggest story of the day. Ayoub, a Jordanian citizen, was well regarded and liked in both the journalist and diplomatic community. We anticipate harsh criticism and anger from the press corps here, as Al Jazeera has claimed the "coalition attack" on their office in Baghdad was deliberate.

11. (C) On April 7 we held a press conference at the USAID relief warehouse. While the Jordan Times covered the conference with a large article on page 3, the Arab language papers ignored it. Without mentioning the press conference, an editorial by Nabil Shareef, editor of Al Destour, decried the "hypocrisy" of humanitarian efforts at a time when the "real issue" is stopping the massacre of Iraqi civilians. The Arab media also carried articles critical of Jay Garner, with many alleging his "close friendship" with Ariel Sharon.
GNEHM